

Public Works Committee
meeting of Tuesday, October 4, 2005
first floor meeting room, Town Hall, 7:00pm

present: Michael Cann, Doug Lowing, Vince O'Connor, Guilford Mooring, Richard Alcorn (obsv.), Walter Wolnik (obsv.), Rob Crowner

1. Doug calls the meeting to order at 7:10pm.

2. Minutes

Vince states that the minutes of the August meeting regarding road flooding did not capture his comments accurately. Rob agrees that his notes on this point were lacking. Vince will forward some clarification to Rob in the near future.

Vince states that his observation about Stony Hill Drive at the September meeting referred to the "left hand" branch rather than a north/south direction.

Walter mentions his September minutes clarification, previously submitted to Rob by email, speculating about whether the spirit of Vince's comments about street repair could be incorporated into the Pavement Management System plan. Vince reiterates that he mentioned specific streets requiring drainage work, but Walter explains that he was affirming the effort to take road repair out of the realm of politics and base it instead on engineering considerations.

Vince moves to accept the September meeting minutes as corrected and to delay consideration of the August minutes until his written clarification is incorporated into it. The committee approves the motion unanimously.

3. Agenda

Doug constructs an agenda after receiving input from those present: (1) Public Transportation Committee warrant article, (2) the PWC warrant article, (3) downtown sidewalk update, (4) street repair five-year plan/pavement management discussion, (5) old business.

4. PTB warrant article

Rich states that the Public Transportation and Bicycle Committee is interested in contributing to the proposed Town Master Plan that the Comprehensive Planning Committee is working on. The PTB committee plans to ask Town Meeting for some money to complete a formal transportation plan, pieces of which it has discussed or worked on already. The elements of this plan might include an inventory of bus routes from all systems touching Amherst, a traffic circulation survey, and evaluation of the suggestions and ideas that have been submitted to the committee.

Rich asks that the Public Works Committee support the article and collaborate on pieces of the plan that relate to the PWC charge. Vince suggests that the PWC could contribute its recommendations on the five-year sidewalk and road improvement plans, including proposed sidewalk extensions. Vince asks whether there is a single website that describes all of the different bus services available to people in Amherst.

Rob asks whether this article is intended to supplant the CPC's Master Plan effort. Rich states that it could be seen as complementing the CPC plan. Vince explains that the alternate funding schedule he circulated at the recent CPC forum is an attempt to "put the horse before the cart"; that is, he would allow relevant committees, such as the PTB and PWC, to assemble the components of a master plan for which they have particular expertise or interest. The CPC would evaluate the various pieces for internal consistency and conduct public surveys to resolve conflicts.

Walter reveals that the PTB's decision to submit this article was not unanimous, with himself - a member of the CPC as well as the PTB - voting against it (the vote was 3-1-1). His experience over the previous year or so indicates that there exists an agenda to undermine the Master Plan effort, which this article could be seen to serve. He clarifies that the CPC will be asking for \$200,000, spread over a few years, to continue its project.

Michael supports the idea of a Master Plan based on public input, with the understanding that it needs continual updating; otherwise developers will tend to push the town's agenda. He is doubtful of the PTB's idea about getting University people involved in working on the transportation plan because completion of such a project will not necessarily be their priority. Vince states that the article does not need to (and cannot legally) describe who will do what for how much, without a contract already in place.

The article should just state its goals.

Guilford points out that the PWC committee is scheduled to meet again on November 1 before Town Meeting begins on November 2, so taking a position on the article could be delayed until then.

Doug agrees in general with the concept of a focussed effort by appropriate committees, and does not perceive that the PTB article is detrimental to the Master Plan process. The committee agrees to consider the request and delay a decision until later.

5. PWC warrant article

Doug states that he has been asked (and has agreed) to represent the committee's petition before the JCPC and the Finance Committee later this week. He requests further discussion of the issue. Vince explains that the PWC article simply asks for certain work to be done (i.e., preliminary surveys of the commons), not that a designated result (such as whether to protect them or not) be achieved. The proposed work would help set the stage for an informed decision about protection to be made.

Vince notes that there are currently two versions of the PWC article in play, one asking for an appropriation and the other describing what the committee intends. It is agreed that only the former should be included on the warrant.

Guilford points out that the Historical Commission will be requesting money for commons protection from CPA funds, so it may be argued that the PWC does not need to ask for money itself.

Vince states that the PWC article would be removed from a potentially emotional debate about tangential issues that could derail the Historical Commission article. Since the commons are currently under the jurisdiction of the Select Board, as town ways rather than historical areas, the PWC article is important to help determine what might in the future be protected. The article would ask for a small amount of money and in part help establish a public participation process for comment on the commons protection effort. It could begin with one of the easier commons, such as the North or East Commons.

Rob states that he has been in contact with the Historical Commission, which seems to oppose the PWC article as infringing on its own effort. Guilford explains that the HC claims jurisdiction, at least of the South Commons, because it is contained within a designated historic district. In fact, use of Chapter 90 funds for road work around the South Commons would trigger oversight by the HC. Guilford states that the South Commons has already been surveyed by the DPW, though it is not fileable because the department does not have a registered surveyor on staff. Vince believes it is appropriate for the PWC to proceed with its proposal, which can later be incorporated into the HC's preservation plan.

6. Sidewalk update

Guilford states that sidewalk work is currently proceeding south from Kellogg on North Pleasant. Work north from Main Street has been halted until a hearing about the planned removal or replacement of some trees in the public way is held. The sidewalk on Kellogg on the north side of the UU church will be removed because it cannot be made accessible due to the trees there.

Guilford states that no further work will be done on the College Street sidewalk this year. Drainage work west to South Whitney is complete, but the sidewalk will be laid next year.

7. Pavement Management plan

Guilford states that he has not yet made a list of the streets needing drainage work, which Vince has requested to inform the committee's recommendation on the five-year street plan. Guilford notes that he would not put them into his recommendation, though the committee could put them into theirs.

Guilford explains his department's policy of repairing a road in such a way that it would not have to be "reclaimed" again during his career. This policy leads to some streets that need repair being put on hold when it is known that sewer work or other major work is on the horizon. He clarifies that sewer work holds exist because the sewer plan is not complete, while holds for drainage work exist because there is not money for the drainage work.

Walter asks whether the OCI (Overall Condition Index) gives a projection for when a particular road will need to be repaired.

Guilford states that there is not yet enough years of data for this. Eventually, the DPW will be able to identify trends in road deterioration.

Guilford states that the anticipated \$100,000 increase in Chapter 90 funds could be considered a drainage plan, with the actual road resurfacing done in year two of the plan. If the increase doesn't

materialize, then the committee could recommend setting aside \$100,000 from the usual budget for drainage.

In response to a suggestion about developing possible in-town connector routes, Guilford states that it is likely that the traffic circulation patterns already in effect cannot be changed.

Michael notes that Bay Road is being used more frequently as a truck route to bypass Amherst.

8. Old business

a. Right-turn-of-red: No news.

b. Pavement Management System discussion: Walter asks how "inputs" to the PMS could be improved so as to make it more effective. Guilford notes that the PMS is affected by human input; in fact, the specific personnel that created the initial data has already changed, which could lead to different input during updates. Doug notes that it is significant that the PMS exists at all now, since there was no system before._

Respectfully submitted,
Rob Crowner